

Vision 2020

Strategic Plan (2016-2020)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

<u>ACMW</u>	ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
ACWC	ASEAN Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
ANNI	Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions
APF	Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FORUM-ASIA	Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
FRCA	Foreign Contribution Regulations Act
HRC-Net	Informal Network of NGOs Engaging with UN Human Rights Council
HRD	Human Rights Defender
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICC-NHRI	International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LANGO	Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RISHRM	Regional Initiative for South Asia Human Rights Mechanisms
SA	South Asia
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TFAHR	SAPA Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defender

I. Introduction¹

The vision of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is to build peaceful, just, gender-equal, equitable and sustainable societies in Asia where all human rights of all individuals, groups, and peoples without discrimination of any grounds, are fully realised in accordance with the international human rights standards and norms. Guided by its vision, FORUM-ASIA's mission is to strengthen the human rights movement in Asia through capacity building of human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), coalition building with like-minded organizations, solidarity actions and evidence-based advocacy at various levels. FORUM-ASIA aims to achieve this mission by creating an enabling environment for capacity building of human rights defenders, and collaboration and cooperation among the human rights organisations and institutions in Asia and across the globe.

As a regional organization, FORUM-ASIA has designed its core programmes to reinforce its position and address priority human rights issues in the current Asian context. FORUM-ASIA will address the regional priorities through a number of strategic interventions outlined in Section IV, and by aiming to reach the following specific objectives: (a) Strengthen the capacity of Asian civil society organisations and human rights defender; (b) Undertake advocacy for inclusive and participatory policymaking in relation to human rights, democratic governance and sustainable development at all levels in particular South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and United Nations (UN) human rights mechanisms; (c) Respond to human rights situations in Asia and beyond through solidarity actions and emergency assistance; and (d) Further strengthen FORUM-ASIA's institutional and operational capacity in order to better serve and effectively represent its constituencies at the national, regional and global levels.

In line with the vision, mission and objectives outlined above, this Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 is expected to provide FORUM-ASIA with a clear strategic direction on how best to establish FORUM-ASIA as a truly membership-centric, premier regional human rights organisation to address human rights and development challenges facing the region, and also to take measures to prevent human rights violations and abuses from occurring taking such initiatives as building human rights cities from the bottom where possible. The Strategic Plan also serves as the principal guideline for the organisation to explore relevant opportunities for geographical and contextual expansion. It also directs the process for developing its annual work plans and

¹ The Strategic Plan has been developed with inputs from all FORUM-ASIA members and its key stakeholders. Inputs from members were collected through sub-regional members' meetings held respectively in Kathmandu on 5 November 2015 among South Asian members, and in Bangkok on 6 December among Southeast and Northeast Asian members. It was further debated during the 8th General Assembly held in Bangkok on 6-7 January 2016, and was adopted unanimously. Key comments and suggestions raised by members and stakeholders have been annexed to the document.

budgets, to address a set of high priority regional issues and challenges in a particular year during the strategic plan period.

II. Basic Premises and Values

To ensure its mission, vision and objectives are fully realised, FORUM-ASIA follows the basic principles of the human rights framework: universality, indivisibility, participation, accountability, transparency and equity (or non-discrimination) during its technical and operational functions. Bound by these core values, FORUM-ASIA actively engages with its members and other stakeholders to promote and protect all human rights, democracy, and people-centred development in an independent, accountable and equitable manner through peaceful means adhering to the principles of rules of law. More specifically, FORUM-ASIA follows the subsequent principles to achieve its objectives:

1. FORUM-ASIA shall adopt a human rights based approach in addressing all its work. It promotes all human rights for all including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as well as the right to development. FORUM-ASIA fully commits itself to the principles of universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights.
2. FORUM-ASIA shall promote democracy. FORUM-ASIA believes that democracy provides an enabling environment for the promotion and protection of human rights. Human rights and democracy are thus interlinked and interdependent.
3. FORUM-ASIA shall strictly enforce a policy on zero tolerance against discrimination on the ground of gender, religion or belief, race or ethnicity, preferential treatment, or any other form of discrimination in its engagements with all concerned individuals and groups. Bribery, corruption and abuse of authority are considered and treated as serious criminal offence.
4. FORUM-ASIA shall adopt the principles and practices of non-discrimination and embrace diversity in all areas of engagement and work.
5. FORUM-ASIA shall promote gender equality and women's rights as a crosscutting issue and theme in all its work.
6. FORUM-ASIA shall recognise the right to a healthy and sustainable environment, and support climate justice.
7. FORUM-ASIA shall be guided by the conviction that protection of all human rights, peace and human security, including freedom from fear and from want, are all constituting and mutually reinforcing elements of sustainable development.
8. FORUM-ASIA shall foster peaceful societies that are just, inclusive, and free from fear and violence. Work of FORUM-ASIA shall be directed by the belief that respect for human

rights, justice, equality, the rule of law, and non-discrimination are at the heart of sustainable peace.

III. Human Rights and Democracy in Asia: The Context, Challenges and Opportunities

The context of the Strategic Plan relates to Asia's rising geopolitical importance in the world. Its geostrategic location and size, rapid technological advancement and size of population make the continent central to international politics. Of the ten largest economies in the world, four are in Asia: China (second largest), India (third), Japan (fourth) and Indonesia (tenth). In the coming years, the global economic share is likely to grow further with the rise of South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and other Southeast Asian nations as new economic powerhouses.

Home to some 60 percent of the global population, Asia is also a continent of stark diversity both within and across. Almost every Asian state has the people of multiple ethnic origins, with diverse religions, belief systems, languages and socio-cultural practices. The region also varies, equally starkly, in terms of the level of economic development, political organisations and systems of government.

Economic advancement contributes to promotion of some human rights, such as, for example the right to education and health, by way of increased social sector spending. However, market-led economic development that Asia pursues also adversely affects the human rights situation in the region. Violation of core rights including labour rights, freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, inhuman treatment of migrant workers and refugees, displacement of communities for the sake of so called development projects, and forced corporatisation of natural resources (on which the livelihood and survival of many indigenous communities depend) have risen exponentially in the recent past. Sadly, these features continue to manifest in the economic development of Asia, particularly with the ASEAN Post 2015 Economic Agenda.

These challenges make it critical for civil society to take advantage of all potential opportunities to advance human rights and democracy in Asia. Taking into account future prospects, this strategy paper is designed around the following key trends and challenges within the region.

A. Concerns and Challenges

- 1. Neo-liberal Economic Development:** While the impressive economic revolution in Asia has improved the standards of living for some people, it has significantly increased the intensity of poverty and inequality – largely due to the growth-oriented development model pursued by Asian countries, which has scant regard for economic, social and cultural rights. This model is not only devoid of human rights based approach but also brings about massive damage to the environment and contributes to global warming and climate change leading to natural disasters with colossal impacts on human rights of the people. While the negotiations on an international climate change agreement continues, communities and people in Asia

have had to face the increasingly harsh consequences of climate change which in turn, has led to enforced migration and land rights issues.

Most Asian countries follow a development trajectory that depends on large-scale investments that are lured by cheap labour, abundant natural resources, lenient and/or non-existent regulatory frameworks and/or access to vast markets as dictated by a number of free-trade agreements. This form of development and economic growth is associated with various forms of human rights violations by state and non-state actors such as corporations, often without redress and with impunity.

- 2. Conservative Democracies:** Socio-political systems in many Asian countries are illiberal and unaccountable at best. Most countries in Asia hold periodic elections and as such, claim to be democratic. However, barring a few, many routinely resist the institutionalisation of the rule of law and the promotion of respect for fundamental human rights of all people: the two hallmarks that make democracies liberal and accountable. Even in relatively mature and stable democracies, such as India, South Korea and Taiwan, little space is available for civil participation in policy processes.

Most of the states in the region also fair poorly in terms of good governance. Corruption and abuse of authority is rampant. Oversight bodies are rendered powerless. Even the judiciary is increasingly facing executive encroachment in many states in the region.

- 3. Shrinking Civil Society Space:** Asian states create very little space, if any, at home for free and informed debate, which is central to the protection and promotion of human rights often contrary to their own international commitments. In countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Burma/Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Sri Lanka, fundamental human rights such as the freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of association and peaceful assembly, are routinely violated in the name of internal security and law and order. Excessive force is used to repress dissent and opposition while suspects are tortured and subjected to inhuman treatment. In some states, dissent is even criminalised. Minorities are not sufficiently protected from attacks by the majority and often such attacks are condoned and no action is taken. Journalists are harassed, held under fabricated charges and even killed for stories that expose abuses by public officials and corporations. Human rights defenders, who voluntarily work on the ground for the defence of the fundamental human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association; and the right to housing, water, land, environment and social protection, which almost all these states have officially promised to uphold, are regularly subjected to threats and abuses. In the midst of these harsh clampdowns, space for civic engagement is shrinking day by day, with some states in the region even introducing new laws restring space for CSO engagement.
- 4. Repressive Laws:** Drafting and enacting legislation that restrict the freedoms of expression, association and assembly is becoming an emerging trend in Asia. Some of these laws are also often designed to control the registration and funding of civil society organisations. The Cyber Crime bills in Cambodia and Pakistan, recently amended Seditious Act in Malaysia, the Protection from Harassment Act in Singapore, the article 112 of the Penal Code (lèse majesté) law in Thailand and the Foreign Contribution Regulations Act (FRCA) in India are

some of the examples of such legislations, not to mention restrictive clauses in terrorism laws and penal codes of many Asian countries. These developments not just curb the freedom of expression and opinion, but also threaten the very existence of civil society.

5. **Death Penalty:** Asia executes the most number of people for drug related crimes, which governments use as a justification for this inhumane punishment. The application of the death penalty to drug-related crimes constitutes a clear violation of international human rights standards. In many cases, the capital punishment is imposed in discriminatory manner targeting those in most vulnerable situations like in the case of migrant workers, youth and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning (LGBTIQ) people. While some countries have abolished death penalty, many still use it like Indonesia, China, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and others. Asia should be in the forefront in the international campaign to abolish death penalty.
6. **Persecution of Human Rights Defenders:** Human rights defenders who support victims and communities affected by human rights violations committed by state and non-state actors have faced increasing persecution in Asia. This has included various restrictions, including legal restrictions, attacks on those defending the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association, right to information, land rights, environmental rights, sexual orientation and gender identity as well as the rights of indigenous and other marginalised groups. It is particularly alarming that some states in the region turn a blind eye when land rights activists are systematically targeted, tortured and even killed. Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam have been very harsh to land rights activists who stand against land grabbing to protect their survival and right to livelihood. Reprisals against human rights defenders who cooperate with the UN has also been of deep concern.
7. **Threats and Legacies of Armed Conflict:** Competition for natural resources and political influence has given rise to regional conflicts within and between many Asian countries, as illustrated in the case of the Spratly islands dispute between China, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia; the island dispute between China and Japan; the island dispute between Japan and Russia; the island dispute between Japan and South Korea; the long standing conflict in the Korean Peninsula; past and ongoing internal conflicts in Burma, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Thailand; the spread of conflict fuelled by religious extremism across South and Southeast Asia; and the long conflict between India and Pakistan. These conflicts have contributed to increased militarisation and securitisation in Asia while as an entrenched culture of impunity and militarisation continues to prevail without accountability mechanisms. The rapid rise of China and India, both economically and militarily, and the increased involvement of the United States in the region for strategic, military and economic interests have further complicated the regional dynamics.

The denial of the right to self-determination, guaranteed by the ICCPR and ICESCR, has also been a cause to trigger internal armed conflicts in many parts of Asia, with regional ramifications.

8. **Migration and Human Trafficking:** Within the framework of globalisation, the world is currently experiencing varied forms of migration. Particularly in Asia, cross-border migration

has been significantly influenced by the political economies of neighbouring states and power players. Refugees, stateless peoples, displaced persons as well as migrant workers from the region have been features in recent international headlines. The situation of Rohingya has shown how human rights abuses when not stopped can lead to migration patterns that could have serious consequences for the entire region and for the rest of the world.

- 9. Rise of Religious Extremism:** In recent years, there has been a rise of religious fundamentalism and extremism in all parts of the world, and Asia is no exception. Tension in Asia has been rising amidst increasing discrimination and attacks against minorities as well as those who advocate for their rights. In the eyes of extremists, rights are often seen to conflict with religion, culture, tradition and nationalism, and they justify their violence and discrimination based on these beliefs. The attacks by extremist Buddhist monks against Rohingya Muslims and other religious minorities in Burma/Myanmar is an example of the dire situation in the region. Brutal killing of atheist bloggers in Bangladesh by Islamic militant groups and attacks on religious minorities and free thinkers in India are other examples. Religious extremism also has a huge impact on women's and LGBTIQ rights.
- 10. Lack of Corporate Accountability:** The lack of respect for human rights by business corporations is another challenge facing the region. Extractive industries have particularly been notorious in this respect. Taking advantage of weak regulatory mechanisms and corrupt officials, extractive industries exploit natural resources with little or no concern for environment and people's livelihood. Workers in such industries are often denied basic protection of labour rights, and at times are subjected to forced labour and other forms of abuses. Those who stand against such excesses are humiliated, threatened and even killed.

Holding business corporations accountable is quite challenging. On the one hand, regulatory frameworks are poor or non-existent. Even when some protections are available, governments lack the will to implement them under the influence of the corporations. On the other, individuals and organisations working for corporate accountability are not properly organised and linked with networks and movements that would provide them protections by way of information sharing, exposing threats facing them and creating pressure on the authorities to protect those under threats.

- 11. Lack of Capacity among Asian HRDs to Rise to Changing International Geopolitical Landscape:** Over the last few decades Asian states have seen their political influence grow. Countries such as India, Indonesia, China, South Korea and Japan are important players in global geopolitical landscapes. This has in a large measure been due to economic growth and a shift of alignments in the post-cold war world. This change has also seen a growth in the influence of non-state actors with commercial including corporate entities. However this change has not touched Asian civil society, which finds itself, further restricted while space available for human rights activities have shrunk. While their governments and businesses have been able to exert greater influence over global affairs including those related to human rights, civil society groups from Asian countries continue to struggle to have their say on geopolitical decisions that relate to human rights. This has made it critical for civil society and the public to be able to participate in domestic foreign policy making and to press on the

fact that foreign policy is public policy. Similarly it has also become crucial for them to be able to influence political decision-making at regional and cross-regional levels when it relates to human rights.

B. Opportunities

- 12. National Human Rights Institution:** Concerns around institutional autonomy and independence notwithstanding, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) continue to emerge as a potential ally for civil society in promoting and protecting human rights in Asia. The latest addition in the region is the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission in Pakistan in 2015. Japan, Taiwan and Cambodia are still in the process of deliberating the setting up of such institutions.
- 13. Regional Human Rights Mechanisms:** The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) pioneered the idea of regional human rights bodies in the Asian region. Despite inherent weaknesses in terms of independence and promptness in service delivery, these mechanisms nonetheless provide platform for civil society engagement with states on human rights issues at the regional level. South Asian civil society leaders and activists have also been campaigning for a similar sub-regional mechanism in South Asia through a special regional task force of civil society leaders and elders. Over the years, the campaign has gained significant momentum with national human rights institutions in the region, and has also won supportive gestures from some governments. For the first time, the discussion on the establishment of a South Asia Regional Human Rights Mechanism was part of the recent Asia-Pacific Forum Councillors and Annual General Meeting held in Mongolia in July 2015.
- 14. International Engagement:** The UN Human Rights Council will continue to be a key UN mechanism to address human rights issues and situations at the international level. There is an important need to engage nationally and internationally with Asian states regarding their foreign policy on human rights as their influence on international relations continues to rise. For instance the increased economic power of Asian giants such as China and India as well as others such as South Korea and Indonesia will also mean increased political influence on global affairs including at fora such as the UN Human Rights Council. Regional or cross regional intergovernmental processes and decisions such as those by the ASEAN, SAARC, Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS), India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA), Freedom of Expression Online Coalition and the Community of Democracies have the potential to influence the position of Asian States at the UN while also having a huge impact on the livelihood of the people. Deliberations in such fora, however, remain largely non-transparent or obscure without much participation by the civil society. In today's globalised world there is an increased need to continue and further strengthen cross-regional collaboration among civil society organisations when engaging both with UN human rights mechanisms as well as other intergovernmental platforms, and to focus on emerging countries from the global South.

- 15. Media and Information and Communications Technology (ICT):** Asia is the largest region in the world in terms of Internet users, and also among the fastest growing regions to attract new users. According to the Internet World Stats, some 46 percent of the global Internet users are Asians. The growth of Internet presents both opportunities and challenges. The Internet has been a powerful tool to reach out to young people and mobilise them for human rights advocacy. It presents an unparalleled opportunity to use social media for popular mobilisation for human rights, social justice and equitable development even in closed polities, like China, where some 642.3 million people use the Internet, constituting 46 percent of total Asian users. With the rise and spread of the Internet, new forms of challenges have also come about, such as the threat to the freedom of expression and the right to privacy. It has also been a tool to trigger hate speech and incite violence, like other media outlets. However, the benefits of the media, including the Internet, outweigh its harms.
- 16. Mobilisation of Youths and Marginalised Communities:** The mobilisation of youth, women, LGBTIQ community, indigenous and other marginalised groups has significantly enriched and expanded the discourse on human rights. Their resilience against violence and repression has been a beacon of hope for the establishment of a culture of human rights. Significant participation of youth and LGBTQ people in large numbers and with vigour and enthusiasm added substance to the outcomes of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/Peoples' Forum in Burma and Malaysia, respectively, in the last two years. Their active participation is expected to provide strength and new perspectives to the human rights movement in the region.
- 17. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Taking off from the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030) were adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. This will serve as the launch pad for action by national governments to promote shared prosperity and wellbeing for all over the next 15 years. The SDGs target ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and addressing climate change and climate justice. CSOs in the region can make use of Goal 16 to advocate for human rights which specifically targets the promotion of rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal justice for all, and ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislations and international agreements, among others.
- 18. Responsibility to Protect:** Since its adoption 10 years ago by world leaders at the 2005 World Summit, Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which addresses genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, has progressed far in its normative development, and is now a well-established political norm. Leadership by governments, regional institutions and civil society towards implementation is critical – especially for Asian countries where adequate measures for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities are lacking. R2P should be mainstreamed in ASEAN and later in SAARC, and trainings to build awareness among officials and CSOs on R2P are much needed to begin this process.
- 19. International Justice:** The establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as an independent permanent court has paved the way for trying persons accused of grave and serious international crimes, namely genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes at the

international level. The ICC is the first treaty-based court ratified so far by 123 countries. FORUM-ASIA initiated the regional campaign for the ICC ratification and implementation that resulted in several countries in the Asia-Pacific Region acceding to the treaty and a good number of them integrating the provisions and adopting cooperation laws into their national legislations. The campaign has raised awareness on issues of impunity, justice and accountability and brought the debates of ratification and implementation at all levels of Parliaments and governments in the region. It also opened opportunities to campaign in countries where human rights activities are not possible but ICC is welcomed, like China, Laos, Vietnam and Brunei Darussalam. The campaign will continue, aimed at further broadening of FORUM-ASIA's outreach to important sectors like parliamentarians, lawyers, judges and prosecutors, women, youth and children, within the context of developing justice mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels, making use of the principles and provisions of the Rome treaty.

20. Knowledge and Use of Human Rights Mechanisms: New and emerging human rights mechanisms as well as challenges have broadened the scope of international civil society engagement as well as the global human rights architecture. Domestic, regional and international civil society organisations are exposed to a vast array of human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and increasing numbers of special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council as well as treaty bodies. In the absence of effective regional mechanisms, Asian civil society organisations have regularly engaged and accessed international mechanism, both new and old, in order to demand accountability and international response to human rights abuses by governments. Information on the workings of these mechanisms need to be shared widely among members and partners, and their capacities enhanced on how best to use them.

IV. Thematic Priorities

1. Protection of Civic Space

- Promote and protect freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and of association, including in the context of elections, freedom of religion or belief, land rights and environmental protection.
- Document, monitor and research on legislation and policies in Asia that affect the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association.
- Conduct advocacy and campaign on situations and cases of violations of freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association.
- Facilitate official and unofficial country visits by relevant UN Special Procedures.
- Organise regional fora/symposia on the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association.
- Map out, monitor and campaign against repressive laws, security related laws/policies, and threats posed by religious and other forms of extremism in the context of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and of association.

- Conduct fact-findings, research studies, capacity building workshops and solidarity missions addressing pertinent issues related both to ‘civil and political’ and ‘economic, social and cultural’ rights.

2. Promoting Human Rights in the Context of Business and Economic Development

- Promote the understanding of human rights in the context of business and economic development.
- Critically engage with SDGs, ASEAN Vision 2025 and other international standards.
- Conduct research on human rights abuses by business corporations, and advocate for corporate accountability using relevant regional and international mechanisms and trade treaties.
- Conduct research on practices of Private Employment Agencies (PrEA) and related abuses of migrant workers, including high fees, in the process of labour migration.
- Facilitate capacity building, networking and solidarity among individuals and organizations engaged in promotion of corporate accountability.
- Organise regional forums to enhance regional solidarity in support of community struggles against adverse impacts of development projects on human rights.
- Increase collaboration with existing networks and partners, such as ESCR-Net, in the areas of monitoring, strategic litigations, and development of new mechanisms to address issues/violations in the context of business.

3. Protection of Human Rights Defenders

- Provide urgent support to HRDs at risk and CSOs under threat and attack from state and non-state actors to continue their operations and existence.
- Encourage, develop, broaden and strengthen the capacity of national networks of HRDs to build stronger defence for human rights at local and regional levels to enhance the impacts of advocacy and campaigns.
- Maintain regular communications with the UN human rights mechanisms especially the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs, coordinate with embassies and diplomatic missions.
- Popularise the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, General Assembly Resolution on WHRDs, and other instruments such as the EU Guideline on Human Rights Defenders.
- Support the role and work of HRDs through the effective use of the above mentioned and other relevant instruments.
- Organise biennial regional HRD forums to strengthen the experience and expertise sharing, networking among HRDs, case submission to and cooperation with the UN Special Procedures, raising awareness on available HRD protection mechanisms and development of new measures, and building regional solidarity to support each other’s advocacy and campaigns.
- Continue to work closely with groups and networks including the WHRDs, LGBTIQ community, indigenous and other marginalised groups.
- Organise campaigns, fact-findings and other relevant interventions on such pertinent issues like arbitrary arrests and detention; torture; extrajudicial killings; and enforced disappearances.

4. Strengthening of National Human Rights Institutions

- Continue to coordinate ANNI and strengthen the cooperation among the network members for more effective monitoring of NHRIs' performance.
- Develop and strengthen the national NGO networks working with NHRIs through advocacy, capacity building and networking efforts.
- Work with network members and all stakeholders to encourage state actors and governments on establishing NHRIs, where they do not exist, according to Paris Principles.
- Strengthen engagement and cooperation with the Asia Pacific Forum on NHRIs (APF) and International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC-NHRIs).

5. Influencing Human Rights Policies and Diplomacy at Regional and International Forums

- Monitor and report the performance of ASEAN human rights mechanisms particularly AICHR and ACWC, ACMW and of SAARC member states, and develop and implement policy advocacy at the regional level
- Assess performance of Asian states at the UN as well as other relevant international bodies against their mandates, and international pledges and commitments, produce periodic reports and influence their human rights related decision-making
- Work cross-regionally and on a South-South basis to increase civil society visibility and inputs into international decision making on human rights
- Assist Asian defenders and civil society organizations to organise national advocacy initiatives to hold their governments accountable for their foreign policy decisions
- Assist Asian defenders to influence Asian and non-Asian capitals beyond their home countries on human rights issues that impact them
- Conduct relevant research on geopolitical landscapes in order to assist civil society to influence those landscapes
- Raise the visibility of international decisions related to human rights in Asia in Asian and international media

V. Intervention Strategies

FORUM-ASIA's work is based on six main intervention strategies, namely; Advocacy (A), Capacity Building (B), Coalition-building (C), Documentation and Research (D), Solidarity Action (E), Strengthening Internal Capacity (F). Intervention strategies of A, B and C are adopted across all FORUM-ASIA programmes and their functions are leveraged by D, E and F.

- 1. Advocacy (A)** is a core mandate of FORUM-ASIA and forms the basis for the Organisation's identity. FORUM-ASIA' advocacy focuses on policy change to bring about positive impacts on the lives of people. Advocacy takes place at all levels through inter-linkage between the UN and regional and national human rights mechanisms on and around

issues specific to the region, including those arising from the monitoring of state performances both at regional and international levels.

In general, key advocacy agenda at the ASEAN level include human rights standard setting to ensure ASEAN's compliance with international human rights standards and norms and mainstreaming human rights in policy and decision-making of ASEAN. The UN level advocacy aims to bring Asian human rights issues at the UN human rights mechanisms, including in particular the Human Rights Council, in coordination with various departments in the Secretariat internally and with members and partners externally, and create international pressure and persuasion to change policies back home. The UN level advocacy also serves to feed grassroots experiences of the implementation of international human rights standards and mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, into concerned Treaty Bodies and forums. SAARC level advocacy concentrates, for the time being, on the creation of a regional human rights mechanism.

2. **Capacity Building (B)** has been a central pillar of all FORUM-ASIA programme activities and remains a crosscutting issue. Building members' and partners' capacity in the area of organisational development and sustainability, human rights documentation and research, effective advocacy, fundraising and financial management, and campaigning and networking continues to be a top priority. Leadership building among a new generation of human rights defenders and capacity building for Secretariat staff also form part of an important priority.
3. **Coalition-building (C)** is a strategic and essential means to achieve the organisational goal of building a leading regional human rights movement. FORUM-ASIA, as a regional network of national organisations and networks, continues to foster broad-based but focused, coalitions to be more responsive to emerging human rights and developmental challenges.
4. **Documentation and Research (D)** serves as the backbone for evidence-based advocacy on human rights and democracy, and will be employed to conduct systematic and consistent information gathering, situational monitoring, trend mapping and development analysis. Informed knowledge base or evidence is necessary to contribute to the production of principled and practical recommendations to all stakeholders, which FORUM-ASIA strives for.
5. **Solidarity Actions (E)** to promote and protect a wide range of rights in unison with other actors and institutions and people-to-people cooperation is a major part of FORUM-ASIA's priority. As such, FORUM-ASIA works with existing networks and peoples' movements dealing with such issues as the rights of migrant workers and refugees, anti-trafficking, free and fair elections, and good governance and participatory democracy. Central to solidarity action is to build collective response to emergency situations and to prevent the escalation of crisis.
6. **Strengthening Internal Capacity (F)** includes building the quality and quantity of membership of FORUM-ASIA further as well as enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the Organisation.

VI. Organizational Management Priorities

- FORUM-ASIA's Intranet system shall be further strengthened to improve internal communications, and preserve organisational information and resources securely. Back-up systems shall be enhanced in all four offices in Bangkok, Geneva, Jakarta and Kathmandu.
- An effective human rights online monitoring and documentation system shall be developed in coordination with the members and partners at national level to map and monitor human rights situation in the region, and design strategy to best address the situation.
- Internet security infrastructure shall be further developed, and capacity of members' and staff enhanced in the area of digital security.
- The Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) system shall be further enhanced and improved to help improve organisational and program planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as documentation and reporting.
- Knowledge management systems, skills and capacity will be enhanced both at the Secretariat and members' level
- Organisational management capacity shall be further developed putting in place necessary structures, policies and systems in order for the Secretariat to be able to rise to emerging human rights challenges and demands.
- A comprehensive organisational sustainability plan shall be developed and implemented to ensure the sustainability of the workings and outcomes.
- A comprehensive policy will be developed and implemented to expand and effectively manage membership and partnership with due priority on the regions where FORUM-ASIA is less represented and where the need for human rights defense is more acute.
- Lobby, advocacy and representational capacity of all offices and member organisations shall be enhanced.

Appendix 1: List of Comments and Suggestions

Following comments and suggestions were provided by members and observers on the Strategic Plan (Vision 2020) during the 8th General Assembly, 6-7 January 2016. Most of these comments have been incorporated in the Strategic Plan. A few of them have, however, been listed as

references to be referred to while developing and implementing annual work-plans, and undertaking advocacy campaigns at various levels.

a. Comments and suggestions included in the strategic plan

- Appreciate the recognition of the threat of armed conflict in the strategic plan. But the issue of denial of the right to self-determination, which is also a cause of armed conflict, is still missing. It needs to be mentioned in the Vision 2020 particularly since this year marks the 50th anniversary of the two Covenants (ICCPR and ICESCE) that have recognized the right to self-determination.
- If FORUM-ASIA wants to be the go-to human rights entity in the region, this needs to be included without reservation, perhaps under intervention strategies or under capacity. This needs to be visible as part of FORUM-ASIA's identity.
- Geographical and contextual expansion of FORUM-ASIA needs to be addressed in the paper. On geographic expansion, possibility of expanding in to Central Asia should be looked into. Mongolian members can play a role in this with their contacts in the Central Asia region. On Contextual expansion, there should be a policy towards China, North Korea and other such societies in the region. Strategies should be explored to address human rights violations in these countries, especially human rights violations in Inner Mongolia or denial of rights of ethnic Mongolians in China.
- Vision 2020 needs to specifically recognize the rights of indigenous peoples, given particular challenges and abuses they face as a result of business and growth oriented economic development.
- As the Vision highlights neoliberal economic development as a challenge, it should include training and awareness programmes for NGOs so that they are aware of the free trade agreements and procedures, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Investor-State Dispute Settlement procedures, which allow businesses to circumvent host countries and violate basic human rights.
- The paper should address rising inequalities, issues of child marriage, policy environment related human rights and civil society with new laws being introduced to further restrict space for HRDs and CSOs. These challenges require more engagement with lawmakers in the region as well as enhanced youth involvement.
- The plan should also look at human rights and development, climate change and climate justice; and, as a new initiative, it might also be important to further explore ongoing attempts to build human rights cities from bottom.
- Religious extremism is correctly included in the context; it should also be included under protection of civic space.
- Strategic framework should include some reflection of success stories to give more momentum to continue and move forward.
- Thematic priority 2 should include another bullet point to recognize communities' rights to development.
- Thematic priorities and intervention strategies need further fine-tuning, as they appear to be repeating.
- Too many priorities may dilute the focus. Strategic plan should thus include only a few strategically important priorities.
- Intervention strategies should include supporting members in countries to build national level coalitions.

b. Comments and suggestions to be considered while designing and implementing annual work-plans

- Child rights can be included as part of a thematic priority or can be explored in the context of business (within already existing thematic priorities).
- To build solidarity, one issue should be adopted from a country to mobilise solidarity action around.
- How to prevent human rights violations should also be part of the strategic plan and direction. One way to this end would be to organize human rights education programmes particularly among the young generation.
- Include country specific human rights situation papers (country papers on human rights violations) as part of the planning process.
- Issue of refugees, particularly Chinese refugees fleeing persecution in mainland and arriving in Taiwan, needs to be addressed.
- National level advocacy should also be included as another level in reference to diplomacy.
- Is there a philosophy for intervention in countries such as Vietnam, which is far behind the rest of the countries in the region?